

February 2, 2006

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND
ENERGY CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission convened in a regular session at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 2, 2006, in the West Annex Meeting Room at Torrance City Hall.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present: Commissioners Basile, Chim, Griffiths, Minter, Reilly, Watson*, and Chairperson McCabe.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Environmental Services Administrator Cessna and Environmental Quality Officer Hill.

*Commissioner Watson arrived at 7:18 p.m.

3. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairperson McCabe.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

MOTION: Commissioner Minter, seconded by Commissioner Chim, moved to accept and file the report of the secretary on the posting of the agenda for this meeting; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Commissioner Reilly moved for the approval of the December 1, 2005 Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission meeting minutes as submitted. Commissioner Minter seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval (with Commissioners Chim and Griffiths abstaining).

7. ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

7A. PRIDE IN TORRANCE AWARDS

This item was considered out of order.

Edna Ruth, 2122 Gramercy Avenue:

Environmental Services Administrator Cessna distributed photographs of Edna Ruth, 2122 Gramercy Avenue, who was given a Pride in Torrance award by an

Environmental Quality Officer who saw her not only sweeping around her own property but the street as well.

Albert and Georgette Avoian, 4824 Garnet Street:

Environmental Services Administrator Cessna distributed photographs of Mr. and Mrs. Avoian's home at 4824 Garnet Street that has solar panels covering most of the roof.

Mr. Avoian stated that the solar panels were purchased and installed by EconoAir in April 2002, that it is a 10.8 kilowatt system, and was made by Cassera. He noted that it can generate approximately 1900 kilowatt hours of electricity, and his cost was \$59,000 after rebates from Southern California Edison Company. He stated that the 25 four foot by eight foot panels cover 800 square feet of the roof, and that electricity that is not used is sold back to Southern California Edison Company.

Responding to Chairperson McCabe's inquiry, Mr. Avoian stated that he hoped to recoup his investment in ten to twelve years and that he became interested in installing solar panels because of his high electric bills and a flier that came in the mail.

Chairperson McCabe presented the Avoians with the Pride of Torrance award.

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Chairperson McCabe reviewed the policies and procedures of the Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Commission, including the right to appeal decisions to City Council.

6. SIGN HEARINGS

6A. SNP05-00009: MILANO LUXURY RENTALS, 20900 ANZA AVENUE

Request: To maintain six, 20' high flag poles with 5' high x 2.5" purple flags with white copy and graphics. Located in the public right-of-way on the west elevation in front of the apartment complex.

TOTAL REQUEST: 75.0 SQUARE FEET

Recommendation:

The Environmental Division staff recommends the following:

- 1) Limit the maximum number of flag poles to (5) per Torrance Code 88.6.6;
- 2) Remove the copy and graphics from the flags;
- 3) Relocate the flag poles onto private property;
- 4) Replace the flags as they become worn and deteriorated.

Environmental Services Administrator Cessna stated that at the December 1, 2005 meeting the Commission directed applicant to develop an alternative to their proposal but that a solution was not developed. She requested that the Commission concur with staff recommendation to deny the applicant's request and for immediate removal of the existing flag poles.

Commissioner Chim received clarification from staff that Torrance code allowed a maximum of five flag poles with no graphics.

In response to Commissioner Griffiths' inquiry, Environmental Services Administrator Cessna explained that existing flags at The Bungalows on Torrance Boulevard were allowed because they were temporary and would be removed when the units were sold. She noted that the applicant's request was for the flags to be permanent, and that they have already been up for over a year.

MOTION: At 7:15 p.m., Commissioner Minter moved to open the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Reilly; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

Brad Morales, Anza Avenue, stated that the Milano Luxery Rentals was spending almost \$4 million on extensive interior and exterior renovations this year. He requested that they be treated the same as The Bungalows and that their flags be allowed to remain in place until they have completed their leasing. He distributed photographs of existing flags at The Bungalows.

Gerri Rude, property manager, pointed out that there would never be a point when the Milano Luxery Rentals were leased up.

Commissioner Watson arrived at 7:18 p.m.

Environmental Services Administrator Cessna clarified that The Bungalows was a "for sale" community, that the flags were allowed for initial sales only, and have an 18 month time period permitted by code.

Mr. Morales stated that removal of the flags would affect their ability to be competitive, and asked that their request for the flags be extended for 18 months until renovation was complete.

In response to Commissioner Chim's inquiries, applicants stated that the property was built 30 years ago, that it was purchased by them in 1998, and discussed past and present renovations. They noted that formerly the units were for temporary housing and now they were more residential than commercial.

When Commissioner Minter noted that last month the Commission gave them the opportunity to work with staff to find another arrangement, Ms. Rude stated that the applicants have spoken to no one from staff as far as working together. She explained that parked cars would block visibility of proposed ground signs and would serve no purpose.

Mr. Morales added that since the December meeting, the corporate office decided to completely renovate the entire building and not just the corporate apartments. He stated that there was not a community in the area with amenities like the Milano Luxery Rentals, that the code was poorly written, and stressed that the improvements would bring in a higher class of clientele from surrounding cities as well as keeping the residents in Torrance.

Responding to Chairperson McCabe's inquiry, Ms. Rude stated that Milano Luxury Rentals has a 97-98% occupancy rate and that due to their policy of preleasing they always have 17 to 20 units on a monthly basis that are coming up.

Mr. Morales clarified that as an apartment becomes available, from this point forward, it would be taken off the market, renovated for three weeks, and then rented out. He stated that they expected the entire community to be renovated within the next two years, with an estimated 10 units per month under renovation.

When Commissioner Reilly expressed concern that the flags detracted from the residential aspect of the neighborhood, Ms. Rude stated that their goal was to make the Milano Luxury Rentals more residential.

In response to Chairperson McCabe's inquiry, Environmental Services Administrator Cessna stated that she assumed that the applicant had a master permit for construction. She restated staff's opinion that the Milano was a rental community and that, if they set a precedent to allow the flags, other apartment complexes in the area would expect to be allowed the same.

Mr. Morales contended that no other community has installed flags or banners in the last year and a half that the Milano has had theirs.

When Commissioner Reilly suggested enhancement of the monument sign on the corner of Anza Avenue and Emerald Street, Ms. Rude reiterated the importance of listing the community's amenities.

When Commissioner Minter noted that the amenities were not changing, Mr. Morales explained that the banners bring in walk in traffic and that they would not have their current occupancy rate if not for them.

Commissioner Watson suggested that the applicant consider other marketing strategies and that the banners do not enhance the image that they are trying to project.

When Commissioner Basile noted that the renovation would be as good a marketing tool as the flags to attract clients, Ms. Rude stated that there was no way to determine the amenities behind the front door without the advertising.

Environmental Services Administrator Cessna stated that there was a big difference in code between rental communities and those for sale, and that the advertisement of every amenity along Anza Avenue was not appropriate. She noted that staff was comfortable with their initial recommendation and was willing to accept a single corporate logo that delineates Milano.

MOTION: At 7:55 p.m., Commissioner Chim, with a second by Commissioner Watson, moved to close the public hearing; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

Responding to Commissioner Minter's inquiry, Environmental Services Administrator Cessna stated that generally staff expected the applicant to come up with ideas within parameters of the code.

MOTION: Commissioner Minter moved to deny without prejudice approval of SNP05-00009, noting that while the Commission appreciates the money that Milano is putting into their facilities, they do not want to set a precedent that banners be allowed at apartment buildings throughout the City. Commissioner Watson seconded the motion, a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval.

8. NEW BUSINESS

8A. ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2005

Environmental Services Administrator Cessna requested that Commissioners provide feedback regarding format and content of the draft Commission Annual Report 2005 prepared by staff, noting that this was the first annual report submitted by the Commission.

Chairperson McCabe stated that he would like to see a running tally of hearings that have been before the Commission.

Commissioner Reilly suggested that a trend analysis be done on a spreadsheet and that the fact that there have been no appeals to City Council should be included.

Commissioners Watson and Basile indicated that the report should be limited to a one-page format.

Chairperson McCabe received clarification from staff that the Commission was the appeals board for Animal Control.

A brief discussion centered on the downward trend of oil cases, whether the Annual Report should be on a calendar or fiscal year basis, and if staff or the Commission was responsible for preparing the report.

Chairperson McCabe suggested that in the interest of time, the Commission should approve the report and discuss changing the format for next year at a future meeting.

MOTION: Commissioner Reilly moved to approve the Environmental Quality and Energy Conservation Annual Report 2005 as submitted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Watson and passed by unanimous voice vote approval (with Commission Griffiths abstaining).

Environmental Services Administrator informed the Commission that the Annual Report would probably be on the Consent Calendar for the February 28, 2006 City Council meeting.

9. INFORMATION ITEMS

Commissioner Reilly shared information about an interesting CitiCable program aired on February 1, 2006 regarding the Cal Trans building on Main Street, Los Angeles and suggested that the Commission visit it.

Environmental Services Administrator Cessna advised that she was working with the facilitator to schedule the Work Plan meeting and that it would take place during a regular session of the Commission.

Environmental Services Administrator Cessna reported that the canopy and encroachment item, with added language regarding maintenance of parkways, was on the February 7, 2006 City Council meeting agenda.

Chairperson McCabe suggested that the City publicize the Pride in Torrance awards.

Commissioner Reilly initiated a brief discussion regarding access of sunlight and promotion of solar panels.

10. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

10A. Commissioners welcomed Commissioner Griffiths to the Commission and congratulated Commissioner Chim on the birth of her son Austin Chim Lieu.

10B. Commissioner Minter thanked Commissioner Watson for the book Garbage Land and stated that he found it very informative.

10C. Commissioner Griffiths stated that he was looking forward to working with the Commission.

10D. Commissioner Reilly also thanked Commissioner Watson for the book.

10E. Environmental Services Administrator Cessna stated that the recycling center tour would be in April 2006.

10F. When Chairperson McCabe inquired about the City's website, Environmental Services Administrator Cessna stated that she would be preparing Environmental Quality Commission and Energy Conservation pages.

10G. Chairperson McCabe discussed setting priorities and the upcoming Work Plan meeting and encouraged Commissioners to think about what they want the Commission to be.

10H. Chairperson McCabe discussed a report that quantifies the benefits of green building and offered to send it to Environmental Services Administrator Cessna for distribution to Commissioners.

10I. Chairperson McCabe initiated a brief discussion regarding the opportunity for the Commission to cosponsor presentations to homeowners associations with the South Bay Energy Savings Center.

10J. Chairperson McCabe initiated a brief discussion regarding his proposal that Environmental Matters and Energy Conservation Matters be placed on the agenda each month.

10K. Chairperson McCabe shared information about the disposal laws for batteries and florescent light bulbs and discussed the importance of conveying the information to residents.

10L. Chairperson McCabe announced that he was married in December 2005.

11. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At 9:03 p.m. Commissioner Watson, seconded by Commissioner Reilly, moved to adjourn the meeting to Thursday, March 2, 2006 at 7:00 p.m.; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

Approved as Amended March 2, 2006 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
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